

SNAKES AND LIZARDS FROM QUEENSLAND AND THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

BY HEBER A. LONGMAN.

SNAKES.

ACROCHORDUS JAVANICUS, Hornstedt.

(Plate VI.)

THROUGH the kindness of Mr. Esmond Parkinson, of the Queensland Railways Department, the Queensland Museum received in June last a magnificent specimen of *Acrochordus javanicus* (♀) nearly 7 feet in length. This snake was secured alive from the Leichhardt River, which flows into the Gulf of Carpentaria. In the collection there previously existed a head, attributed to the same genus, said to have come from the Gilbert River in the same district, but as there was some doubt as to the locality no record was published. Now it is evident that this head represents an immature example of the same species.

This snake is occasionally found in the Malay Peninsula, Siam, Java, and New Guinea, and its discovery in North Queensland makes an interesting addition to its range. With its ally *Chersydrus granulatus*, it is placed in the subfamily *Acrochordinæ* of the *Aglypha* series. Barbour suggests that *Chersydrus* "is barely separable generically" from *Acrochordus*, and that it may on critical analysis be reduced to subgeneric rank.¹ Our specimen agrees well with the descriptions given by Günther² and Boulenger,³ but there are a few points which may be noted. Running from the gular region to the anus are ventral series of narrow elongated spinose scales, about four wide, which are sharply differentiated from the adjoining lepidosis. Duméril and Bibron state⁴: "Le ventre est plat, quoique présentant une légère saillie correspondant à la série des tubercules, qui se joignent deux à deux par une sorte de suture." The writer has no exotic specimens for purposes of comparison, and it is thus possible that the sharply differentiated median ventral series of scales in our snake may be so distinct from the more northern forms as to establish varietal or even specific rank. This Leichhardt River snake is light chocolate brown above, with lighter very irregular markings forming an indistinct series of bands. The sides and ventral surface are lighter, and many of the spinose scales (which in structure bring to mind those of certain Agamid lizards) present the appearance of white enamel. There are about 145 scales around the body, 24 rows or so of the median dorsal series being considerably larger, some being over 3 mm. high.

The dimensions are as follow:—Total length 2,100 mm.; head 68 mm.; tail 245; max. diam. 300 mm. Weight 8 lb. 7 oz.

¹ 1912. Barbour, Zoogeog. East Indian Is., Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., Harv., xlv, No. 1.

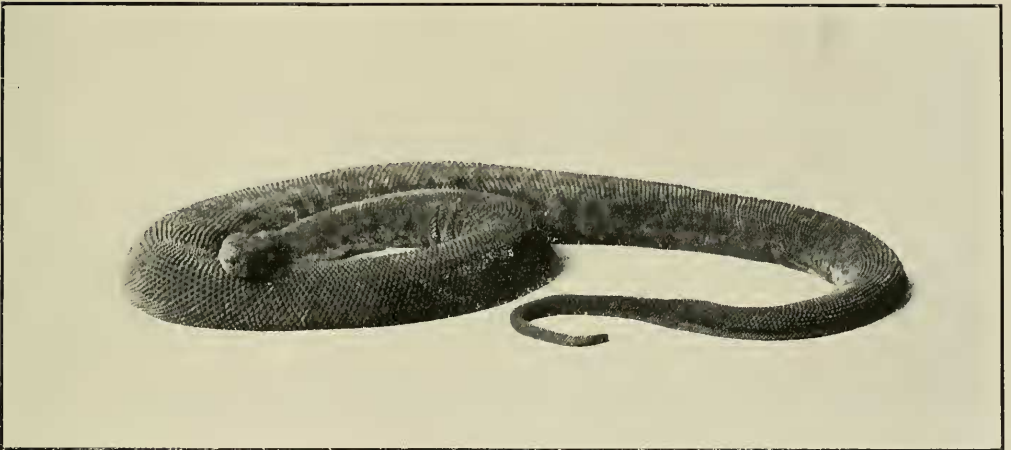
² Günther, Rept. Brit. India, 1864, p. 336.

³ Boulenger, Brit. Mus. Catalogue, i, p. 173.

⁴ Duméril et Bibron, Erp. Gén., vii, p. 33, 1854.

ACROCHORDUS JAVANICUS.

PLATE VI.



ACROCHORDUS JAVANICUS, Hornstedt.

(Photographed shortly after death.)

Face page 46

Günther mentions (loc. cit.) that this snake grows to a length of 8 feet, and S. S. Flower records that he obtained a specimen from Sapatoom which was 6 feet in length. S. S. Flower⁵ says: "This snake, when alive and fresh caught, is of immense girth and very powerful, twisting round one's arms with a grasp like that of a python. It seems to be purely aquatic (though Cantor records an exception), frequenting canals and ditches. On land as a rule it is very sluggish, but when aroused will strike suddenly with great force, and can inflict an unpleasant bite, as its teeth are apt to break off in the wound." F. F. Laidlaw notes that the Malays call this reptile "the elephant's trunk snake."⁶

On examining our specimen for entozoa, the remarkable length of the tracheal and true lung was noted, it being extended through the whole body cavity. On reference to literature, the writer finds that this specialisation has already been recorded by J. C. Thompson in his useful contribution to the anatomy of the Ophidia.⁷ In the stomach were found remains of elytra of beetles, which Mr. H. Haeker informs me belong to the *Dytiscidae*, a family of water beetles. Earlier observers have noted that this species feeds on fruits—a curious characteristic for an ophidian. Cantor stated that a female in his possession brought forth not less than twenty-seven young ones in the course of about twenty-five minutes; they were very active and bit fiercely.

Reg. No. Q.M. J 15/2384.

In November, 1915, we received a skin (6 feet 3 inches in length) of this species which had been obtained in the Lukin River, near Ebagoolah, a more northern stream which also flows into the Gulf of Carpentaria. For this snake the Museum was indebted to Mr. H. S. Martin.

The close ally, *Chersydrus granulatus*, Schneid., which is occasionally found on the North Queensland coast, is a smaller snake.^{7a} Its scales are far less rough, being tuberculated and not strongly spined, and the nostrils are not placed so anteriorly as those of *Acrochordus javanicus*.

ASPIDIOTES MELANOCEPHALUS, Krefft.

From Maneroo Station, near Longreach, a specimen was forwarded to the Museum which extends our knowledge of the dietary of a hungry snake. This consists of the fore part (about 12 inches) of a black-headed python, *Aspidiotes melanocephalus*, and almost completely engulfed in its enormously extended jaws is the head of a large plain turkey or Australian bustard, *Chloriotis australis*. As the snake is a comparatively small one, being only about 1 inch in diameter, whilst the turkey's head is fully two and a half times that, the bony bulk of the attempted meal will be realised. It seems that one of the men on the station, after shooting a turkey, had cut off its head and thrown it down. Subsequently passing the spot he found the snake lying dead. The specimen was preserved and then donated to the Queensland Museum by Mr. J. Dickson.

⁵ S. S. Flower, P.Z.S., 1899, p. 658.

⁶ F. F. Laidlaw, P.Z.S., 1901 (2), p. 576.

⁷ J. C. Thompson, P.Z.S., 1913, p. 414.

^{7a} Lonnberg and Anderson (Vet.-Ak. Handl., Stockholm, Bd. 52, No. 7, 1915) note an example of this snake from Cairns as its first Australian record. The Queensland Museum has received a number of specimens, and the snake was recorded for Australia twelve years before by E. R. Waite in vol. v, Records of the Australian Museum.

ASPIDIOTES RAMSAYI, Macleay.

A very robust specimen of *Aspidiotes ramsayi*, just over 2 metres in length, has been forwarded from Yeulba in Western Queensland by Mr. J. P. Bennett. Some doubt has been expressed as to the presence of suboculars separating the upper labials from the eye in this species. Macleay's type is apparently lost, and his description has been differently interpreted by Boulenger⁸ and E. R. Waite.⁹ In specimens examined by the last-named, the seventh labial enters the eye, but our snake is of interest because there are very distinct shields separating the labials from the eye on each side. Each new specimen received adds to our knowledge of the variability of the head-shields of these snakes.

RHYNCHELAPS AUSTRALIS, Krefft.

Ten Queensland specimens of this snake were recently examined, and the following variations may be noted. In one the maximum number of body-scales is but 15, and there are but 5 upper labials. Two other examples show this reduction of the upper labials, and Krefft also noted a Clarence River specimen with this variation.¹⁰ In all our specimens the frontal is distinctly shorter than its distance from the end of the snout. The internasals are in one case completely separated by the posterior angle of the rostral.

RHYNCHELAPS LATIZONATUS, De Vis.

This snake, described by De Vis in Annals of the Queensland Museum, No. 6, 1905, p. 49, cannot be separated from the larger forms of *Furina occipitalis*, D. & B.

PSEUDELAPS CHRISTIEANUS, Fry.

In February, 1915, we received from Mr. Gerald F. Hill a species of *Pseudelaps* from Port Darwin which the writer described in manuscript as new, associating with it the name of the donor, to whom the Queensland Museum is indebted for many interesting specimens. Correspondence with Mr. D. B. Fry, then of the Australian Museum, Sydney, showed that he had previously received the same species from the same locality, and this was subsequently described and figured as *Pseudelaps christieanus*.¹¹ Our specimen agrees well with Fry's description, but is somewhat larger, being 290 mm. in length. There are 175 ventrals and 57 pairs of subcaudals (tail uninjured). The writer has also received a specimen of the allied *Pseudelaps diadema* from Port Darwin. Garman recorded this species from Cooktown¹² and Boulenger from "North Australia."

LIZARDS.

CALYPTOTIS FLAVIVENTER, De Vis.

In 1886 De Vis described,¹³ in conjunction with three species of *Salarinus*, a new genus and species of skink which appear to have escaped notice except for a nominal record in Lucas and Frost's list.¹⁴ Although the type is lost, there is

⁸ Boulenger, B.M.C. Snakes, i, p. 92.

⁹ Waite, P.L.S. N.S.W., ix, p. 715, 1894.

¹⁰ Krefft, Snakes of Australia, 1869, p. 52.

¹¹ Fry, Roy. Soc. Qld., xxvii, pt. 1, p. 91, 1915.

¹² Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., Harv., xxxix, p. 12, 1901.

¹³ Proc. Roy. Soc. Qld., ii, 1886, p. 57.

¹⁴ Aus. Assn. Ad. Sci., Rep. 1901, p. 261.

no doubt that De Vis' species was a *Lygosoma* (*Siaphos*) *scutirostrum*, Peters. (Several examples of this skink were recently collected by the writer at Toowoomba, being partly buried in the humus under logs.) The deep yellowish colour of the ventral surface, which is very noticeable in life, generally disappears in specimens preserved in formalin. The species is recorded by Boulenger in the British Museum Catalogue, iii, p. 330.

LYGOSOMA BANCROFTI, sp. nov.

From the Upper Dawson River district we recently received, through Dr. T. L. Bancroft, a skink which is of considerable interest because it illustrates another intermediate stage of limb degeneration in the *Lygosoma verreauxii*, *truncatum*, *frontalis*, *ophioscincus* group.

Body elongate and resembling that of *L. verreauxii*. Anterior limbs didactyle; posterior undivided and very minute, only projecting about a millimetre. Head much as in *L. verreauxii*, but prefrontals larger and frontal subhexagonal with antero-lateral sutures almost as long as postero-lateral sutures. Lower eyelid scaly. Ears hidden. Twenty scales around the middle of the body; dorsals slightly larger. A pair of enlarged preanals. Tail (apparently undamaged) shorter and thinner than body. Silver grey above, many of the scales having a dark spot in the centre; whitish below. There is no trace of the white (rarely orange) nuchal band which is so characteristic of *L. verreauxii*.

Total length 185 mm.; tail 50; fore-limb 3.5; body diam. 7.

Reg. No. Q.M. J 15/2560.

As it was desirable to note the range of variation in *L. verreauxii*, a series of over sixty specimens of that common skink was examined. Considering the dactylic variation which has been noted in this genus by Boulenger and others, it is surprising to find that in every case, except where the limbs were obviously broken, three digits were present. The digits are, however, more prominent in *verreauxii* than in *bancrofti*, and the hind limbs are relatively longer. Although there is considerable variation in the shape of the frontal in this large series, the antero-lateral sutures between it and the prefrontals are relatively distinctly less than in *L. bancrofti*. The didactyle fore and the minute hind limbs, together with the shape of the frontal and the absence of a nuchal collar, easily distinguish this new species from *verreauxii*.

Although the limbs are so degenerate, they are still of considerable use to these skinks. When a living *L. verreauxii* is placed on the ground, the stumps are moved with remarkable speed and vigour in the endeavour to promote locomotion over a comparatively smooth surface. It is perhaps worth recording that in the tiny pelvic girdle of this skink, all three elements (ilium, ischium, and pubis) are present on each side in a specimen examined.

Anomalopus lentiginosus, De Vis,¹⁵ described as with fore-limbs didactyle and with a white nuchal collar, is recorded by Boulenger as a synonym of *L. verreauxii* (*Zool. Rec.*, 1888).

LYGOSOMA TRUNCATUM, Peters.

A specimen which agrees well with Peters' description was found at Moreton Island last April by Mr. R. W. McMillan and donated to the Queensland Museum. This rare lizard is 90 mm. in length and nearly 4 mm. in diameter.

¹⁵ Proc. Lin. Soc. N.S.W. (2), ii, 1888, p. 823.

MOCOA CÆRULEOCAUDA, De Vis.

It may here be conveniently recorded that *Mocoa caeruleocauda*, De Vis,¹⁶ from Sudest Island, Louisiades, is a synonym of *Lygosoma cyanurum* (Lesson).

DIPLODACTYLUS INTERMEDIUS, J. D. Ogilby.

From the Darling Downs we have received specimens which were first referred to *Diplodactylus strophurus*, D. & B., but on further examination these are thought to be more correctly designated as *D. intermedius*, Ogilby.¹⁷ It is remarkable that ~~the~~ Ogilby, and Werner refer to Duméril and Bibron's *D. strophurus* as being without tubercles in the caudal region, and this negative characteristic appears in diagnostic tables. This is not in keeping either with the illustration (Plate 32, fig. 1) or the original description by the French herpetologists, as the following extract will show:—"Sur le dessus de la queue, on voit successivement, depuis sa racine jusqu'aux deux tiers de sa longueur, deux rangs transversaux de tubercules, et deux rangs de très petits grains squammeux; mais à partir de cet endroit les rangs de grains augmentent de plus en plus jusqu'à la pointe caudale."¹⁸ Ogilby's *D. intermedius* is thus more closely allied to *D. strophurus* than has been noted, but it seems distinguishable by its yellow tubercles and the black granules which dot both lower and upper surfaces. From *D. spinigerus* it is marked by its longer snout and more regular series of dorsal tubercles. Duméril and Bibron's species came from Shark's Bay, Western Australia, whilst Ogilby records as habitat for *intermedius* "interior of New South Wales." Boulenger notes (B.M.C., i, p. 100) two specimens of *D. strophurus* from Sydney. *D. spinigerus*, *intermedius*, and *strophurus* are undoubtedly closely allied, and some of our southern specimens also show traces of the spines in the supraocular border which distinguish Boulenger's *D. ciliaris*. This tuberculate group thus presents an interesting example of a small range of variation over a continental area, and perhaps later authorities will prefer to use trinomials for the four species.

We are indebted to Mrs. Haager for our latest specimens.

DELMA FRASERI, Gray.

Two specimens from Port Darwin, donated by Mr. Gerald F. Hill, add to Queensland Museum records of the range of this snake-like lizard. Boulenger in 1885 stated Western Australia as its habitat.¹⁹ In the Horn Expedition Reports, Lucas and Frost note "All over Australia" as its distribution.²⁰ F. R. Zietz records specimens as taken "from under fallen logs in the MacDonnell Ranges."²¹ The common Melbourne form has been figured by McCoy.²² In 1888 De Vis described two closely allied Queensland species, *Delma tincta* and *plebeia*,²³ which were separated on very slender grounds from *D. fraseri*.

¹⁶ Annals Queensland Museum, ii, 1892, p. 12.

¹⁷ Ogilby, Rec. Aus. Mus., ii, 1892, p. 10.

¹⁸ Dum. & Bibr., Erp. Gén., iii, 1836, p. 398.

¹⁹ Brit. Mus. Catalogue, i, p. 244.

²⁰ Horn Exped. Zool., ii, p. 125, 1896.

²¹ Proc. Roy. Soc. South Aus., xxxviii, p. 442, 1914.

²² Prod. Zool. Vic., dec. xvi, pl. 153, fig. 1, 1888.

²³ Proc. Lin. Soc. N.S.W., (2) ii, p. 824.

Garman's *D. reticulata*,²⁴ with dark-edged scales as in *plebeia*, was secured in the Cooktown district. His counting of fourteen scales evidently includes the ventral series, which brings it into line with De Vis' species. The type of *tincta* has the third supralabial elongated and below the eye, as in *reticulata*. When a large series is examined (the Museum has over twenty), it will be seen that little value can be placed on this and certain other characters. The second supralabial has a tendency to divide, and we have two specimens with three labials in front of the subocular on the one side and but two on the other. The longitudinal rows of body-scales (including ventrals) vary from 14 to 16, and McCoy records 18. The nasal shields also exhibit variation. Günther has stated²⁵ that "confluence of two shields into one is by no means of uncommon occurrence in this lizard" (*D. fraseri*). The type of Rosenburg's *D. lineata*,²⁶ a close ally, had the anterior part of the nasal fused with the first supralabial. Garman seems not to have been aware of De Vis' species when he described *D. reticulata*, which is certainly not distinct. *D. reticulata*, *tincta*, and *plebeia* have much the same colour markings on the head, the bars of which are very distinct in young specimens. *D. plebeia* has no median preanal scale, but it would be unwise to lay much stress on that character. In the opinion of the writer, the only satisfactory way to deal with a large series of these lizards is to regard *reticulata* as a synonym and *tincta* and *plebeia* as but variations of *D. fraseri*.

It is interesting to note that at least one of the earlier Australian herpetologists has mistaken the fore part of a *Delma fraseri* for a young brown snake, and T. S. Hall has drawn attention to the resemblance of the barred head of these lizards to the juveniles of *Diemenia textilis* as a possible case of advantageous mimicry.²⁷

It may be added that Günther, when describing *D. baileyi*,²⁸ did not endorse the separation of *Cryptodelma* as a distinct genus by Fischer on account of the presence of preanal pores, stating that "a comparison of the allied species will show that this technical character leads to a rather unnatural subdivision of the genus."

DIPOROPHORA BILINEATA, Gray.

A large series of this common lizard has been sent from Port Darwin by Mr. G. F. Hill. The remarkable variation in colour and lepidosis of this and the allied species, *D. australis*, Steind., has been pointed out by Boulenger (B.M.C., i, p. 394) and by R. Broom.²⁹ The head of *D. bilineata* is figured by N. de Rooij in her useful work, "The Reptiles of the Indo-Australian Archipelago" (Leiden, 1915, i, p. 134). *Physignathus nigricollis*, Lomberg and Andersson,³⁰ has a most suspicious resemblance to forms of *D. australis* and is either a synonym or a curious case of convergence.

²⁴ Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., Harv., xxxix, p. 5, 1901.

²⁵ Ann. Mag. Nat. His., xii, p. 145, 1873.

²⁶ Ann. Mag. Nat. His., xvi, p. 131, 1905.

²⁷ Victorian Naturalist, xxii, p. 74, 1905.

²⁸ Ann. Mag. Nat. His., xix, p. 170, 1897.

²⁹ Proc. Lin. Soc. N.S.W., xxii, 1897, p. 641.

³⁰ Vet.-Ak. Handl., Stockholm, Bd. 52, No. 7, p. 4, 1915.